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GAUTAMA THE ENLIGHTENED  
*and other verse*

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POETRY: A Lecture  
THE CONWAY  
NINE DAYS WONDER  
IN THE MILL



# GAUTAMA THE ENLIGHTENED

*and other verse*

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD



WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD

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## GAUTAMA THE ENLIGHTENED

### *Invocation*

O Master of the Calmness, come  
Forth from the shadow of the tree,  
Gladden the joyless who are dumb  
And make the blind to see,  
That, in the tiger in his rage,  
And in the summer fly  
Alike, in struggle on his stage  
A brother passes by,  
Till, from the fires of the art  
There flash the perfect ring,  
Or through the violet's golden heart  
He pass into the Spring.

"I am the Prince Siddartha, the King's son.  
My Father rules the Sakya warriors  
Here in this palace of Kapilavastu  
Wherein, for seven hundred years, his forebears  
Have been the Kings; where I shall be the King.

Of all lives known to me, my life has been  
The happiest, hitherto; I have known no-one  
Not valiant, not made beautiful by thought,  
Not gentle from an inner ecstasy.  
All who have taught and trained me have been wise,  
Brave, swift in justice, merciful in blame,  
Striving to fit me to be King of men.

Because, in time, (thus the tale goes) my Father  
Will gird his sword about him and take horse  
And shake the Sakya bannerole and ride  
West, to the palace where his forebears dwell,  
And be with them forever, and myself  
Will rule the Sakya kingdom in his stead.

And, of all lives of men, what happier is  
Or can be, than to seek a Kingdom's love,  
To watch over and guard a City's fate,  
And guide a Nation's fortunes happily?  
To rid it of oppression and misrule,  
To give its citizens a share in all things,  
So that they all are beautiful in body,  
Alert in mind, in knowledge excellent,  
And in their spirits companied with angels?

My lot it is to be this blessed thing  
A King of men; a wondrous lot is mine.

And now, today, I stand upon a threshold  
For here, today, two princes come to try  
If one of them, or I, deserve the prize.  
We are to struggle for the mastery  
And he who wins will marry the Princess,  
The Princess Yasodhara, whom men call  
The Rose of all the Beauty of the East.  
O may my spirit, mind and hand be sure  
That I may make this earthly wonder mine.

If it be granted to my skill to win;  
If the Princess be mine, there will be feast,  
I shall be married to that lovely spirit  
One more surpassing ecstasy made mine.

Surely, the Life of Man is beautiful  
Beyond all telling; I have never seen  
Anything, yet, that is not beautiful.  
Outside this palace of my ancestors  
Are fragrant flower-gardens, fruit-tree-groves,  
Cool fish-ponds sparkling with the fountain-splash,  
Then the great river, then the hills, then mountains

Snowy forever in the northern heaven.  
Wherever the eye looks deep beauty dwells.

And loveliness is in the people here.  
Beautiful children play about the palace,  
The waiting-maidens sing; they are like flowers,  
And like gazelles for grace, like birds for mirth;  
The men-at-arms are marvellous in strength  
Swift spearmen, mighty bowmen, runners, wrestlers,  
Glowing with health and merry in their courage.  
And beautiful are those clear, eager spirits  
Who teach me wisdom that is like a spring  
In a green forest giving life to all things.

And I, who live amid this happiness,  
And may be happier still, and may be King,  
And may be happier beyond count in making  
My people happy, shall have still a joy  
Before me, when the golden morning comes  
And I take horse and ride west to the palace  
To find my Father and his forebears gathered  
And dwell with them forever in great bliss  
Leaving my Son to rule the Kingdom here.  
That is the end of Life, my teachers tell me.  
So that all Life is exquisite, God wot.

In a few moments, I must meet the Princes  
In contest for the hand of the Princess.  
I shall be winner of the contest, surely,  
For all my Destiny seems happiness . . .

And yet, there is another happiness.

I recollect a day in early childhood.  
After the rain, I went with other boys,  
Into the fields, when all were full of flowers.  
We went past a still water where the cranes  
White, with red plumes, stood silent in the stream  
Watching, while dragon-flies gleamed by, and snakes  
Panted with flicking tongues on the hot stone.  
The water-mice clambered the iris stalks  
To their inwove grass-houses; the fish splashed,  
The little deer their dainty muzzles dipped.

There was a flower of mingled red and white  
So marvellous in form, colour and scent  
That, looking at it there, I was aware  
Of a white planet in a winter dawn  
And of cocks crying at an unseen herald.  
And then of Joy so great that all was joy  
In joy I understood and shared all life.  
I was the living soul in everything.

I have not told of this. I have asked friends  
To name their dear delights, but never yet  
Heard one describe a happiness like that  
Which was a passing into the world's heart.

There must be ways of entering that joy.  
About us are the doors of Paradise  
A million barred, a million never barred.  
How find an unbarred door and enter in?

And yet, I have sufficient happiness.  
And now the Princes wait to struggle with me  
I will go pit my power against theirs.

Such was my thought before the testing time.

I tried my speed of foot against the princes,  
And beat them both; we swam the river-whirlpool,  
I beat them both; we wrestled, and I threw them.  
Lastly, the Princess' Father bade them bring  
The bow of the old hero of his House,  
To try, if we could string it; they both failed.  
I strung it, bent it, sent the screaming arrow  
Into the blowing banner of my mark  
So that I won the Princess, Rose of Women.



And then, before my triumph, there came this:  
A sick man, mad with sorrow, was brought by  
Beside his poor wife's corpse, a young thing, merry,  
So the poor madman said, untimely dead.  
And after them the madman's father came.  
I saw the three:—Sickness, Old Age and Death,  
The woe of Life, till then kept hidden from me.  
I learned, for the first time, that I, Siddartha,  
Being a Man, was chained unto the three.  
That if I 'scaped the two, the third would have me.

When I had looked on Sickness, Age and Death  
I could not live as Prince in happiness  
While Man, my brother, suffered from such ill.  
I thought, "There must be healing for such pain.  
If I go seek, I may discover it  
And bring it to mankind." So forth I went  
With fellow-searchers, striving to find peace.  
I starved the rebel flesh till it shrank from me  
Leaving me almost bone, while my mind strengthened.  
I forced my mind to wring its evil from it.  
Terrible agonies of body and mind  
I beat myself to bear, but found no Peace  
Came to no Joy to gladden sorrowing man.  
I could send forth my spirit like a bird

Over the waste, and in the waste it flew  
But found no green leaf of delightful Peace.  
With a clear mind I saw my withered flesh  
As blackened skin upon a skeleton,  
And knew that I had starved myself to death  
For no bright gift of Joy, only despair.

Then I remembered that bright day of flowers  
Near the calm water when my Joy had come.  
And thought, "That day was Joy; today is death.  
Enlightenment can only come through Joy  
I have gone into deserts to find Death."

Let all men praise the Woman who brings help.  
There, as I lay a-dying in despair,  
The bright Sujata and her Reaper passed.  
Mercy and Light were in that woman's mind.  
She saw what my companions would not see  
That I was dying in my misery.  
She and her Reaper helped me to the shade,  
She gave me milk and rice; she spoke such words  
As came like rain upon my desert mind,  
So that I cried, "Leave me beneath this tree,  
For I believe the Light will come to me."

Under the tree my mind wrestled with death.  
Light filled me with its agony of peace.

I saw Man in illusions of desire.  
I knew my own illusions at an end  
No stain of an illusion smirched my mind  
It saw, it knew, it could; all powers it had.  
In darkness and in brightness I saw lives,  
My life, my former lives, my myriad lives,  
Stretch back into the world's forgotten times,  
To selfs long dead, when I was beast and bird,  
Fish in the water, insects in the air,  
Tree, shrub, or plant, or lichen on the stone,  
Or unseen atom in a water-drop.  
The iron of my evil fettering me  
The gold of my achievement freeing me.

Desire, longing for life, and ignorance,  
Dropped from my mind like rags; I was set free,  
I knew that I need never live again,  
Save as a mind that with undying Peace  
Moves among mortals in their misery  
Shewing a way from darkness into light.

## SHOPPING IN OXFORD

TWENTY-FOUR years ago, I wandered down  
An unknown, unseen, midnight Oxford Town,  
And crossed the Thames, and paused upon the bridge  
To note the smudge of wood on Hinksey Ridge;  
Then went, by summer hedgerows, up the hill  
In dewy dimness, all things lying still,  
To hear the night-jars in the pine-wood spinning  
And the first blackbird tell the day beginning.

Since then, my happy days have all been spent  
By this gray town for Learning excellent;  
Some of her scholars whom the world commends  
Have been for years my neighbours and my friends.  
As to the World and Time, she is to me  
A Sovran City of Civility.

Others have told her power, who have known.  
A vagrant, I, not rightfully her own,  
Who draw from her not Learning, having none,  
But yet the kindness shared with everyone,  
The grace and beauty scattered up and down,  
And this in special, single to the town,

That those within her shops in courtesy  
Repay the buyers whatsoe'er they buy.

Twenty-four years of purchase, in amount,  
Mean, many parcels more than I can count.  
In all that little life-time, year by year,  
The weekly wants have brought me shopping here  
And knowing buying thus, I wonder well  
What sort of life it is, to stand and sell.

The sellers stand, to cherish all day long  
The hundred wants of the demanding throng;  
To bear, however much they inly burn,  
The rude, the pert, the thruster out of turn;  
The meddlesome, whose fidget-fingers change  
The place of goods that daintinesses range;  
The troublesome-fastidious whose desires  
Are, to see all, yet never to be buyers;  
Or, possibly still worse, the unprecise,  
His want unclear, who makes the labour thrice.  
And many others bring a special hell  
Doubtless, sometimes, to those who stand to sell,  
Who, whether well or ill, or hot or freezing,  
Seek out the buyer's pleasure and are pleasing.

That they are pleasing, all who ever buy  
In Oxford shops can surely testify:  
Of all the shops I name or do not name  
I and their other buyers can make claim  
That, of our purchased parcels laid in pile  
Each one was rendered friendly, with a smile,  
A charming word or jest that gave a grace  
Of silver to the penny's commonplace,  
So that a spirit companied the thing  
Borne in the paper package tied with string,  
So that it seemed a thing not bought and sold  
But given, out of friendship and worth gold.

It is a pleasant pastime to go eyeing  
Where things attract and tempt you into buying;  
The dustless shining things which subtly wait  
Yourself, the willing fish for this the bait.  
Among these verses I have written down  
The fruits of shopping about Oxford town,  
Each with the happy memory of faces  
Who greet me friendly at the customed places,  
And of the streets in which the windows shine,  
That are the magnets to these friends of mine;  
For here, new pleasures purchasers attend,  
They find the looked-for treasure and a friend.

I seek few treasures, except books, the tools  
Of those celestial souls the world calls fools.  
Happy the morning giving time to stop  
An hour at once in Basil Blackwell's shop,  
There, in the Broad, within whose booky house  
Half England's scholars nibble books or browse.  
Where'er they wander blessed fortune theirs,  
Books to the ceiling, other books upstairs.  
Books, doubtless in the cellar, and behind  
Romantic bays where iron ladders wind,  
And in odd nooks sometimes in little shelves,  
Lintot's and Tonson's calf-bound dainty twelves.

Many fair windows look on Oxford streets  
Bright to the passing fly with booky sweets,  
I know of seven others, but, alas,  
Prudence and taxes make one guard' e pass'.

If books be suns, there is a moon's delight  
About the things which help a man to write,  
There is a joy arranging like the cook  
The many things which help to make the book,  
The paper bluish, blue-lined, toughish, glazed,  
Which (when I wrote with pens) I ever praised;  
The canvas note-books, taking to the eyes,  
The paste-pots precious in a last revise;

The black and scarlet inks, the pens they feed  
Of metal, quill or glass, or gold or reed;  
The blotting-paper, pink or white, which sips  
The damps of Helicon with thirsty lips;  
The rubber-bands, or metal-weights, which guard  
The written chapter on its base of card;  
The envelopes, of twenty different shapes,  
Each gummy-tongued above a mouth that gapes,  
Each with a void in which will some day lurk  
The chaptered, numbered, named, completed work.  
The crayons, too, blue, green and yellow-tipped,  
Useful for marking bundled manuscript;  
And things with ever brief but useful lives,  
Pencils and little pocket paper-knives;  
And, waiting still the Greek seal I affix,  
Cardinal-coloured wax in slender sticks.

Then the black-bright, smooth-running, clicking, clean  
Brushed, oiled and dainty typewriting machine,  
With tins of ribbons waiting for the blows  
Which soon will hammer them to verse and prose;  
These and their plenishings, I love to tell them  
And love the happy houses where they sell them.

Then, too, the Printers, piled up to the roofs  
With old work done and drying poster proofs,



With letterings in red, announcements, sales,  
And damp, smudged galleys fluttering from nails;  
The perfume of the drug that poets drink  
(The brew they sometimes die of), printers' ink;  
And close at hand the music poets bless,  
The lift and trample of the printing press.  
What memories I have, correcting versions  
Of proofs for Recitations and Diversions,  
In days of peace when every year's July  
Brought us a Festival of Poetry.

All who love books must love the Binder's skill  
That fights all foes that work a volume ill,  
That slays the boring worm and nulls the fox  
(Who yellows leaves like lichen upon rocks);  
That smooths the tattered, dog's-eared crumpled page,  
That brightens youth and glorifies old age,  
That keeps old leather sides upon their backs  
And scorns to shear dear pages with his axe.  
Maltbys, the binders, re-create books thus;  
And many a royal binding glorious  
Of blue morocco or white vellum pure  
They have made fair, in beauty to endure.  
And cases, too, they make, in which are slipped  
Old printer's copy, type or manuscript,

There like the mummy of old joy, to wait  
A maid's cremation in some unknown grate.  
These things St Michael's binders subtly build  
Of linnened card, and having lettered, gild.  
All these, it once has been delight to buy  
As workman's fittings to the craft I ply.

Though books delight me, sometimes music seems  
As sure a gateway to a world of dreams  
Therefore I sometimes tread romantic floors  
Lined to the ceiling with recorded scores,  
Where, each in's box, the music-lovers stay  
Hearing ten tunes and wishing nine away.  
There, as the artist must, I follow fast,  
The one, though interrupted, to the last,  
And bear its black disc home and set it going  
And tread its peace in moonlights out of knowing.  
That room of records keeps the faery keys  
Of gardens lovelier than th' Hesperides,  
Of wells more liquid with eternal thought  
Than Lully drank of or de Leon sought;  
Therefore I see no records lifted down  
Without the thought: "There Joy goes into town."

And other tools I sometimes come to find;  
Carpenter's tools delighting hand and mind;

Vices to clutch the work, and crows with claws,  
And saws and tenon-saws and metal-saws;  
Chisels and firmer chisels, gouges, clippers,  
The tiniest brads, the neatest little nippers,  
Minutest screw-eyes, nails and screws of brass,  
And drills so subtle that they bend, alas.  
And other goods I sometimes come to seek  
Sticks of hard woods and little scraps of teak,  
And thread of many sorts to be the rope  
Aboard a model not yet more than hope;  
The paints and brushes for her, and the oil  
Which gives such polish after so much toil.  
What fun to buy these things, and to have known  
In him who sells skill greater than your own.

While life is energy and blood is red  
Some parts of shopping must be daily bread:—  
Therefore, I praise the bakehouse standing sentry  
Close upon Gloucester Green at Friar's Entry,  
Wherein one buys the crusty, fragrant, sweet,  
Hot brown bread, "precious as the gods do eat".  
And scones so full of symmetry and light  
That the glad tooth is half afraid to bite;  
And buns that make the questing spirit see  
All Chelsea ever was or Bath could be.

In praising bakers, let me also praise  
Those who refresh the weary on their ways;  
The Shamrock tea-rooms, up the narrow stairs,  
What scones, what jellies and what jams are theirs.  
There, as the weary rest in Gothic nooks,  
They hear the Oxford bells and bless the cooks.

Man needs instruction, daily bread and rest;  
Convention adds, he should be shod and dressed.  
And England has a lack which all deplore  
The suit for work within and out of door;  
Such as the French blue blouse or English smock  
One not in use, the other not in stock.  
Till lately, too, she kept a crazy rule,  
"In summer seasons no man must be cool".  
I was the first that order to defy,  
I wandered cool in Oxford only I.  
I praise the tailors who, (perhaps in fear)  
Helped this insane, wise, easy pioneer.  
I well remember in that early stage  
Men's angry envy or their jealous rage;  
But I was cool and smiled to see the scowl  
Glare from the furry coat and woollen cowl.  
I bless the skilful men who keep my form  
In summer tranquil and in winter warm.

Then those who during many years have shod  
The feet upon whose leather I have trod,  
In all five continents and seven seas  
And twenty-six of man's communities.  
Upon their leather, whereso'er I roam,  
I have set forth and later wandered home  
And ever find, re-entering the place  
The same swift helpful tact and courteous grace.

Then those, across the way, that fragrant cave  
Of joys of life and guards against the grave;  
Whence, besides drugs, the buyer carries home  
The sponge that sluices and the soaps that foam,  
Throat-blessing gargles, and the scented, nice,  
Pungent, sub-Tropic, cuttled dentifrice;  
The shaving-brush whereon the lathers swoon  
Being plucked at dawn from badgers of the Moon;  
Boracic crystals, lint and cataplasms  
And cures for all from pernio to spasms.

In Market Street, a glittering shop there is  
Pounce-like and sharp with many cutleries  
Of knives, and the most cunning scissors made,  
And many a different kind of razor-blade.

Since edges have meant progress, sages stop  
Always, to eye the wonders in this shop.

In many a morning I have gone to choose,  
Groceries, fruits and sweets at Grimby Hughes,  
That crowded house where all that man has dreamt  
Of dainty niceness is in sight to tempt.  
Then, the Cadena, crowded with the wise  
Who seek fresh-ground the coffee that they prize  
And bear it home in paper-bags imprest  
Scenting the street with Araby the Blest.  
There, too, a counter stands of sweet things sweeter  
Than tongue can ever tell in words and metre.

Then in the Market there will always be  
The stalls to tempt one, beautiful to see,  
And to remember long in after hours  
For some undreamed-of ecstasy of flowers,  
Or some strange fruit, or subtle alien plant  
Remote among her spines, perverse, askant;  
Or rapturous words from little girls and boys  
In Paradise from looking at the toys.  
Even in time of war, the shops display  
The wealth of sea and land in their array,

The sides of beef still dangle from the hooks ;  
The meat-axe chops for critic-witted cooks ;  
And damp on marble slabs the ice amid  
The fish forget the pure through which they glid.

And other shops there are where none can pry  
Unless with peril of a bankruptcy ;  
The charming shops of old and lovely gear  
From what were homes of folk no longer here,  
The chairs, the stuffs, the gems, the yellowed lace,  
The fans once cool on some forgotten face ;  
The shawl where silken butterflies still glance  
Whose owner saw Carlotta Grisi dance ;  
The dainty havings sadly left behind  
By ancient love and elegance of mind ;  
The necklet-lockets still containing hair  
From loves, now ghosts, long mingled in the air ;  
Enamelled boxes haunted by the faint  
Sweet scent or tint of powder or of paint ;  
The netted purse, whose owner long since went  
Under the spade, her last spade-guinea spent ;  
The miniatures, un-named, of folk unknown ;  
And saddest yet, the painted eye alone.  
Among the gilt, the silk and old brocade  
Of ruined homes which past affections made,

Sometimes a mirror, chair, or broidered piece,  
Is singled thence, to take another lease  
Of human use and sometimes seekers' eyes  
Searching the print-pile come upon a prize  
A Durer or a Rembrandt; or a drawing  
Of ships disdainful of the billows clawing,  
(Such prizes have been mine) and sometimes, too,  
Among the porcelain, all white and blue,  
Of early Worcester, one perceives the bowl,  
The bell-like, swan-like, chipless, crackless, whole  
Desired piece that summer's fragrant stir  
Shall fill with rose-leaves or with lavender.

The common thing, if blessed by head and heart,  
Becomes uncommon as a work of art;  
So these who sell to those who only buy  
Have made their sellings bright in memory.  
Thanks cannot pay what kindness freely gives,  
But the glad kindness runs the world and lives.  
I live the gladder for the daily thought  
"They gave me golden what my copper bought."



## MAHDAMA'S QUEST

THE moon had kept the world awake,  
The herons filled the marsh with cry,  
Prince Mahdama lay sick with ache  
For love of Princess Malati.

He saw the moon burn into ember  
And other lights in Heaven shone  
His spirit struggled to remember  
The image of her beauty gone.

Until, as the False Morning whitened,  
A wind about the palace eaves  
Blew cool, and all the fruit-trees brightened,  
Turning the silver sides of leaves.

Then, whether he were wake or dreaming,  
He could not tell, he could but stare  
For surely, by the fountain gleaming  
The Princess Malati was there.

He thrust aside the clicking curtain  
He strode into the dusk to see.  
He said "Who are you?"; he was certain,  
Or was he certain? it was she.

He took a step towards her, saying  
"Princess, Princess, what is it, speak."  
Her hands were stretched, as if in praying.  
And tears were gleaming on her cheek.

It was herself, though white and broken,  
Her very self; but, as he neared,  
The words "For pity . . . save" . . . were spoken  
And then she dimmed and disappeared.

Dimmed through the water-droplets falling  
In silver from their lapsing tree . . .  
He cried "Is it your spirit calling . . .  
In deadly peril, calling me?"

Ah, this is vision and deceiving  
But I must ride at once"; he rode  
With heart despairing and sighs heaving  
For Princess Malati's abode.

Towards him, spurring through the morning  
He met her servant, hurrying on.  
Crying "I ride to bring you warning . . .  
The Princess Malati is gone.

Before the daybreak, word was brought her  
Her foster-mother, stricken dumb,  
Besought by signs her darling daughter  
For Heaven's pity's sake to come.

She went alone; within the hour  
We learned the message false; and since  
Our searching-parties ride to scour  
The ways for her; come, help us, Prince."

They rode the dairy-meadows, questing.  
They searched the outland farms in vain.  
Some tried the easting, some, the westing,  
Mahdama called "I'll try the plain".

"The plain" they answered, "None would ride there.  
The Princess least of all; beside . . .  
The Powers of the Dark abide there . . .  
There is no track, and none will guide."

He said "It is the one remaining  
Way to her friend, not yet explored"  
He rode alone back to the laning  
That led through jungle to the ford.

Up, from the brake, the wild-duck scuttered,  
Up, in a V, into the sky.  
The river wimpled, the reeds fluttered,  
The reed-birds breathed their warning cry.

There lay the little-ridden hithing;  
Beyond, the reed-beds stood up still  
With some leaves trembling, some leaves writhing  
At the water's impulse and wind's will.

He eyed the brake beyond the water;  
The reed-birds flitted without fears;  
No ambush waited there to slaughter,  
And yet his horse pricked up his ears.

Nay, sniffed, and stiffened as he eyed it,  
That wall of wavering green-gray,  
Something uncanny was inside it,  
That sent a warning on the way.

So, tense, he crossed the ford, not doubting  
That something evil lay beyond.  
The long-tailed harebell-birds were scouting  
For water-flies among the frond.

The long-tailed little blue-birds scattered;  
The narrow trackway opened wide,  
There, dead among the reed-stalks shattered,  
The Princess' mare lay on her side.

She had been shot and then forsaken  
The lovely Moonlight, the white mare.  
Doubtless, the Princess had been taken,  
Many men's feet had trampled there.

There they had crouched in covert, hiding,  
The tale was written for his eyes.  
Thither the Princess had come riding,  
Thence they had galloped with their prize.

He cantered on after the reivers  
To all things but their traces blind.  
Inly he withered with the fevers  
That gnaw within a lover's mind.

The country which he rode grew stranger  
The strange died into the unknown.  
But what are wounds and death and danger  
When love is burning in the bone?

When western skies grew gold and greener  
And stretching tigers 'gan to stir,  
And first the burning air grew keener  
He came upon a trace of her.

A scrap of blue and golden weaving  
Had caught upon a jungle thorn.  
Past any question of deceiving  
It was a stuff which she had worn.

It was a silk ; herself had decked it  
With broidered birds ; and cruel force,  
Ruthless, alone could thus have wrecked it  
Galloping by upon a horse.

The woods thinned out, the traces thickened,  
More men had joined the robber band  
Here they had shaken out and quickened  
To gallop into open land.

And, as the sun set, lo, a fastness,  
Of tumbled stone, long since decayed;  
Beyond, a downland in its vastness  
Towards an endless Heaven strayed.

No love nor any raider shewed there,  
The tracks led on into the down.  
What were the standing stones that glowed there  
Like doorways in a burning town?

Surely, those giant stones resembled  
A place described in many a tale  
At which the flesh of hearers trembled  
And pulses leapt and cheeks were pale.

Surely within them lay an altar  
Rough-hewn for many a bloody rite  
Where dying moanings made the psalter  
To praise its lord, the god of Night.

The tracks seemed to lead past the highland  
Whereon those stones of horror stood  
The downland swelled there to an island;  
The sunset glowered red as blood.

He thought: "I cannot follow further  
These tracks, by sight, I'll turn aside  
Enter that temple of old murder,  
And pray the god to be my guide.

For it is said, that those imploring  
In agony of prayer, may hear  
With sound of moan and clash of warring,  
The very god of Night draw near,

Who, if man's blood and hair are proffered  
Three hours before the cock can crow,  
Will touch and take the tribute offered  
And tell him what he seeks to know.

I will implore the god; tomorrow,  
If the god speaks, I shall be sure  
What certainty I have of sorrow  
What possibility of cure."

A darkness breathed upon the burning;  
He made the temple stones his mark.  
His horse and he went trembling, learning  
The many murders of the dark.



The stalkers of the night were creeping  
Death hovered on a noiseless wing  
The cries came of the victims' weeping.  
He halted at the temple ring.

He picketted his horse and harkened.  
No sound of human being stirred.  
He fancied that the darkness darkened  
And something breathed a whispered word.

Like gallowses, in part dismembered  
The granites of the temple ran;  
As places will, that place remembered  
The evil stamped on it by man.

What was it? Was the night-wind making  
Cry, or were watchers drawing breath?  
He knew not which, but entered, quaking  
The circle of that church of death.

Within, with whimpering and moaning,  
The night-wind seemed to search the night,  
Now, like a temple-priest intoning,  
Now, like a cut-throat stepping light.

Guessing his way, he groped and fumbled  
Across that darkness filled with moan  
Till at the circle's heart he stumbled  
Upon the earth-laid altar-stone.

That was the spot, whereon, for ages, .  
Men had implored their darkest thought  
And paid down human blood as wages  
To lure the horror that they sought.

"Here I must ask for help" he muttered.  
"Here I must offer blood and hair,  
And pray". . . . He left the rest unuttered  
For things with lights were coming there.

What was it, that was coming nearer?  
Some wandering lights there seemed to glide,  
Then hesitate, then glitter clearer,  
Then sway a little to the side.

What were those lights, advancing, pausing?  
Blood-seeking moths, or bats, or birds?  
What silent murder were they causing?  
What thought ran in them without words?

Surely, those sideway darts and leapings  
Were springs from things with tooth and claw  
Snatching to drink the hot blood's seepings  
At urge of some inhuman law.

They paused, then on, and now a drumming  
Mixed with a clacking as of bone,  
Told him that these were mortals coming  
To feast the midnight altar-stone.

And now, with pans of fire rushing  
Strange shapes in red sped to the ring,  
The sparks out of the pans went gushing  
Like wasps of fire on the wing.

Dog-headed were these shapes, and yapping  
Like ban-dogs starved of blood; they stood  
Within the ring of sarsens, snapping,  
Lit by their fires, red as blood.

Mahdama crouched beside the table  
At which the night god ate and drank  
The dog-heads yapped and sparked; the babel  
Of drum and clacking rose and sank.

Now, with wide-swinging lanterns, slowly,  
The dancers entered to their rite ;  
Creatures in black and red, unholy,  
Were dragging forward one in white.

The clack kept time ; their lights and censers  
Shot sideways, back, then glittered on ;  
They danced in little steps, like fencers ;  
Pale fire round their leader shone.

Till, lo, the evil altar nearing,  
They halted, and a hymn began,  
The utterance of all the fearing  
In all the midnight of a man.

As Mahdama crouched, watched and listened  
A striped thing headed like a beast  
Laid on the altar knives which glistened  
And lights came forward for the priest.

The priest drew to the altar, lifting  
A call which struck the singers dumb ;  
A flying moon broke through the rifting,  
The time of sacrifice had come.

Man-tigers dragged the white form nearer  
As victim on that stone to lie.  
Mahdama saw the figure clearer  
It was his darling, Malati.

Then dancers hurtled round the altar,  
Mewing, and beating discs that clanged.  
Mahdama's spirit did not falter,  
He took the death-knife, toothed and fanged.

He leaped upon the altar, crying  
"I am the Power whom you call.  
I am the dealer of Man's dying;  
Death, the destroyer of you all."

They moaned with terror as they hearkened.  
He cried. "You flying Moon, make dark"  
Cloud quenched the moon, the temple darkened.  
He leapt and struck the high-priest stark.

And lifting Malati, he bade her.  
"Have no more terror now; come on"  
Then swiftly, with his arm to aid her,  
Out of the temple they were gone

He set her on the horse, and taking  
A rein in hand, he ran beside.  
Out of the cloud the Moon came breaking  
The plain before them opened wide.

The moon came flying out to wreath them,  
A cock crew for the coming day,  
Out of the downland grass beneath them  
Bewildered beetles sped away.

Before the Sun, then swiftly springing,  
Had sunken to his rest in red,  
The City bells were set a-ringing,  
The Princess and the Prince were wed.

## AN ART WORKER

WHEN St John's chimes for Ten  
I greet that chief of men  
Sir Mahlstick Tubes, R.A.  
To whom I sit all day,  
As Christian Martyr scorned,  
As Beauty Unadorned,  
As Niobe who mourned,  
As any famous She  
Whom Tubes wants me to be  
From any sort of time  
In any kind of clime,  
Under the snow or sun  
In costume or in none.

I will say this for Tubes,  
He doesn't paint me in cubes,  
Nor as a cupboard broken,  
With half its drawers pulled open,

Nor as a question mark  
Mixed up with bits of shark,  
Some music and a shoe,  
As lots of them might do.  
He thinks me, I believe,  
A fair daughter of Eve  
Whom his great mind will hallow  
Into a thing of tallow.

At five, I hear him say  
"That will do for today.  
Tomorrow morning, at Ten".

I dress and leave him then.

He goes to tea and rest.  
When he has bathed and dressed,  
His Wife is newly gowned,  
His shiny car comes round.  
Himself glossy and shiny,  
In expectation of dine-y  
With cocktail of sherry wine-y.  
Away they drive in the dark  
To some big house near the Park,  
Where I, as Tamar or Leah,  
Or Helen, or Amalthea,



Or wonder of other nation,  
Am part of the decoration.  
There let him talk till one  
Of Art achieved and undone.

I, who have left him thus,  
Hurry aboard a bus,  
Up to the roof, and there  
Watch, for a copper fare,  
Sunset, west of the chimneys  
Putting red in the dimness,  
Sometimes herons in flight  
Bound for a reed-grown eyt,  
To stand knee-deep through the night  
In Colne, Kennet or Thame  
Whom change leaves ever the same.

Sometimes the windows burn,  
Or wind-vanes gleam as they turn,  
Or little boys in a race  
Rush, with light in the face.  
They are such happy ones  
I wish that they were my sons.

Then, what a joy, as light  
Makes the shop-windows bright,

Shops like welcome to Kings  
With all bright beautiful things,  
Which Kings would covet to buy  
Were they as happy as I,  
Only to give, to give,  
To make some gladder to live.

Now the bus halts; again  
I climb the dark little lane,  
Take the blind little turning:—  
There is the window burning.  
A step runs to my knock,  
A hand turns at the lock.  
I enter; the latch clicks,  
St Mary's chimes for Six.  
My lover and I are one;  
Now the day has begun.

First, he will show and say  
What he has done to-day  
Upon the work in hand.

The task that he has planned  
Is, to paint twenty scenes  
Of what today's life means

To us, the young, who tread  
As heirs to all Earth's dead,  
Through London Town today.

What twenty would you choose,  
You, in my lover's shoes?

These scenes are in his plan:--  
Ten toils of labouring Man;  
Essential Labour such  
As no time alters much.  
Ten scenes from tale and myth,  
That Man still comrades with;  
Such as should deck the wall  
In School or City Hall,  
'Change, Library or Bank,  
Now, usually, left blank.

First, the ten toils beginning  
With Bread through all its winning,  
From plough-man in the acre  
To reaper, miller and baker,  
The last with head bent down  
Watching his batch turn brown.

Next, shearers, cobblers and weavers,  
Stone-cutters and wood-cleavers,  
Builders of homes of men  
Work done agen and agen,  
To house, clothe, shoe and feed  
Adam's swift leaf-brief seed.

Next, the ten tales that still  
Have living power to thrill:—  
The Man born to be King:—  
The Statue wed with the Ring:—  
The square of Priam's Court  
With Hektor's last fight fought,

With Hektor dead i' the wain  
Brought home to Troy again;  
The King and the dumb crowd;  
Three Queens crying aloud,  
One, for a child left lone,  
One, from a heart made stone,  
One, from self-pity and shame.

Cassandra shrinks from the flame.

Then four old tales of ours,  
English as Berkshire flowers,  
The tale that Shropshire told

Of pure Sabrina of old,  
Pursued by bloodhounds grim  
To raddled Severn's brim,  
Calling the god to save,  
Then plucked to his green cave  
To be with him forever,  
Queen of the Shropshire River,  
With her bright damozils  
The brooks out of the hills.

Arthur's and Modred's bands  
In fight on Camlan Sands,  
The last men left of each.  
The Queens' barge off the beach;  
And, in the rocks, the Past,  
Claiming her sword at last.

The Fruit, Eternal Life,  
Which Marc gave to his Wife,  
And she, to Tristan the brave,  
And he to Brangwen gave,  
And she, back to King Marc,  
Who went out into the dark  
And gave it to a poor  
Sick woman at his door.

Then Francis Drake, long since,  
There, with the Maroon Prince  
High in the skysaild tree  
Watching the Southern Sea,  
And seeing there unfold  
The English quest for gold,  
The reachings and the rakings  
Of all our galleon takings,  
And more, his valour's heir  
Founding new Nations there,  
New Nations, such as men  
Had never dreamed of then.

His seamen lure with bread  
The parrots blue and red  
And offer English pennies  
To the brown piccaninnies.  
The piebald monkies loot  
The Maroons' frails of fruit.

Gautama lying prone  
A wreck of skin and bone  
His body broken and dulled,  
His search for light annulled.

The monks, his friends, as one  
Thinking his struggle done.  
Then she, with milk in pail,  
With rice and cakes in frail,  
Stooping to give him strength  
That he beholds at length  
The Enemies, yet sees  
Things brighter, conquering these.  
And shapes of light drawn near  
To bless and crown the Seer.

The broad-leaved tree gives flower  
Knowing the holy hour.

Then Ross, that man of Hope,  
Bent at his microscope  
After so many a check  
Seeing the changing speck  
That laid the secret bare  
Of Death riding the air  
Blasting the garden of earth  
O glad day of new birth.

Lastly, an end of Night,  
The gray rocks taking light ;  
Upon the olive tree  
A dewy silver-green ;

The things of darkness shrink.

By the tomb-door, a link  
Burned-out, droops in its ring.  
A cock there shakes his wing.

The April flowers are sparse,  
A blackthorn, with white stars,  
Some daffodils, and studs  
Of green, where a thorn buds.

Distant, behind, below,  
The City ramparts glow ;  
The light shines on the rock  
Behind the crowing cock.  
The carvings of gods gone  
Egypt and Babylon.

In blankets, sleeping hard,  
The sergeant and his guard.



One waken sentry shy  
Startles, to find drawn nigh  
Mary, and friends with her  
With frankincense and myrrh,

So, then, I first look over  
The day's work of my lover;  
Pondering, I suggest  
What might make better best.  
We plan the show to be  
When all the world will see  
These twenty on the wall  
And hurry to buy all.  
Sometimes we find a cheer  
Supposing the time here  
When every building glows  
To give joy as Man goes  
With stories in the sun  
Companioning each one.

Someday, beyond all doubt,  
When folly's day is out  
And wisdom's day is in  
Such methods will begin

In London and elsewhere  
With great tales painted fair  
Wherever a great mass  
Of folk will meet and pass.  
For someday, the blank wall  
Distempered white, will pall  
Someday the cry will be  
For something fair to see.  
Someday a Corporation  
Will up and save the Nation  
By giving vivid life  
To citizen and wife . . .  
Meanwhile, on the small scale  
My lover tells his tale.

Next, to our evening meal  
At Jules', the Spinning Wheel,  
In Playmate Street, Soho,  
Where all our party go.  
Our friends will all be there  
In cigarette-thick air.  
The plates clack, the folk feed,  
The waiters move with speed,  
Crying their kind of tune:—

“Un Chateau La Lagune.  
Biftek un . . Encore une . .  
Un cotê . . un gigot . .  
Un Punch . . Des escargots . . .”

Painters, sculptors, engravers,  
All of the salt with savours,  
Writers of verse and prose,  
Men whom nobody knows  
Except ourselves, who are sure  
That they will grow and endure.  
We, who are young, contain  
The new germ in the brain  
Whose influence will be  
The new time's ecstasy  
Of greater joy to live  
Radiant and positive  
Spite of the mumbling mass  
Of john ox and jack ass.  
There's none, of the Jules' set,  
Whose face you would forget  
Each soul is set to say  
The new word the new way.  
And what is the new word.  
But April to the bird.

A statement of delight  
In life and love and light?  
That Art in everyone  
Is something of the Sun,  
Delighting, cheering, living,  
Exalting and forgiving,  
Colouring, making glad,  
Leaving the dead, the mad,  
The sick, the sour, the sad,  
First to the medicine maker,  
Then, to the undertaker,  
For all those five and Art  
Are all the poles apart.

These thoughts are deep instilled  
As base on which to build,  
Art is the Sun which shines.

But here at Jules' one dines,  
And many a merry quip  
Goes between cup and lip.  
What comment and what fun  
About work lately done  
What judgment and what wit  
What portraits neatly hit,

What plans for the Review  
That shall be something new  
With that strange tale of C's  
With those designs of D's;  
And three of F's etched heads;  
The tale in verse of Z's;  
U's sonnets and Y's prose;  
The treasure-box of O's.

These things we all debate  
Betwixt the cup and plate

Then, having dined, we go  
Through Soho to the show,  
The music-hall or play,  
Now thrilling London clay.  
Or the great concert-room  
With organ-pipes in gloom  
Where some Quartet is more  
Like one man's play than four;  
Or flame-haired pianist  
With steel springs in his wrist  
And fire in his fingers  
Asserts the plea that lingers.

Sometimes, we climb long stairs.  
The orchestra prepares,  
The red sail-curtain droops  
With dull gold done in loops;  
And in the crack before us  
Some shining shoes of chorus.  
The eighty players tune:—  
It will be Seville soon,  
Seville in Andaluth,  
In love, in passionate youth.

But the delight most dear  
Comes seldom in the year  
When shines the happy star  
And Russian Ballets are.  
No other art so fair  
Is with us anywhere,  
So when it comes we hie  
Gladly tow'rds bankruptcy.

But when it rains and snows,  
Or fogs, or a gale blows,  
We build the studio fire  
To whiter-heat and higher;

I cook the fragrant dish  
Of buttered eggs or fish;  
He makes the toast; I brew  
A coffee given to few;  
Then, having washed and cleared  
The filthy night is cheered.

We draw beside the blaze,  
He takes some book of plays,  
Or Chaucer, Milton or Keats.

He reads, while the storm beats,  
While the hob-kettle mizzles  
The roasting chestnut sizzles,  
The mind within his voice  
Makes every rhythm rejoice.

Or each a pasture finds  
In new books by new minds  
Or old books of a lure  
Forever sweet and sure  
Cervantes, Burton, Gray . .  
(Dickens for holiday)

Or, if the books not cheer,  
We have our comfort here  
We fix our model stage  
On which our dolls engage

In setts of painted ply;  
Designers, he and I;  
We re-tell and re-dress  
Romantic loveliness;  
All the best fables known  
We have re-made and shewn.

Our blithest joy is this;  
Our very dream it is  
To see our story thus  
Made live and glorious  
Upon some English stage,  
A book's bright painted page  
Alive with sweeping swarms  
Of exquisite lithe forms.  
Well, what the artists see  
Must someday come to be.  
Meantime, we pose and plan  
The best scenes known to man.

Sometimes our friends are here  
For good talk wild and dear,  
Of art done or to be,  
Of work to read or see;  
And one brings his design,  
To shew this man of mine.



We judge it line by line.  
One reads a tale or play.  
One has some verse to say,  
And one with strings or flute  
Leaves us so thrilled and mute  
We only inly ask  
Such mood for our life's task.  
    One sometimes brings to show  
    His rare portfolio  
    Etchings or drawings all  
    Found at some sale or stall  
    Or in some dingy box  
    Of books all gone to fox,  
    Or marine-store decayed  
    With whom the burglars trade.

It is a pleasure rare  
To see these and compare  
Our own rare bargains found  
In London's hunting-ground ;  
    The Melencolia print ;  
    The Lucas mezzotint ;  
    The seven Liber plates ;  
    The Meryon early states ;  
    The Sheffield tea-pot white ;  
And my most dear delight

The Etty portrait ta'en  
In Smithfield, in the rain,  
Beneath a naphtha flare  
Upon a barrow there,  
Midst cracked red bedroom glass,  
And bits of harness-brass  
And books with covers loose  
And pewter out of use,  
And old brass candlesticks.  
Its price was three and six,  
But I paid only three  
"Because it is like me"  
A lady of desire  
Gazing upon a fire  
Black dress and red divan  
A joy to any man  
And I, I found her, I  
With my quick little eye.

When the first swallow shy  
First haunts the dusk, we hie  
To see the maiden veil  
Of plum-bloom lying pale  
Upon the trees' green polls  
What time the cuckoo tolls.

And when the scarcely borne  
White fleece is on the thorn  
May's maiden raiment  
Rich-incense-thick in scent,  
We go upstream and boat  
Watching our image float  
Where written ripples drag  
At roots of yellow flag,  
And water-rats swim by  
Quaking the mirrored sky,  
And the harsh heron flogs  
Blue pinions as he shogs.  
Or, while the thorn's a priest  
We go where bricks have ceased  
To woods where moonlight dapples  
The bluebells with her apples  
And dim deer step the blanch  
Never snapping the branch.

These jaunts of dear delight,  
On Sundays and at night  
Are done with extreme thrift.  
I plan and scheme and shift;  
Each penny goes with plan

Of how to serve my man  
To give him beauty and peace  
While his great gifts increase  
While his intense eye keen  
Takes something from things seen,  
To make more poignant still  
An image of his will.

Sometimes, instead, we seek  
The crowd-life at its peak.  
The salesmen shouting wares  
Under the naphtha flares  
In markets jammed with stalls  
Where gong clangs and man bawls  
And women finger and cheapen  
That fourpen' may be threepen'  
Oranges, rabbits, meat,  
Dates, pulped to sticky sweet  
Violets, cabbage, toys,  
All colour, movement, noise.

Sometimes we seek the anger  
The shatter of bells and clangour  
Of fire-engines at speed  
Hurling to help man's need.  
The sparks flash at the curve

The lines of helmets swerve  
The crowd runs, the smoke pours  
Flame fills windows and doors.  
Or on some football field  
We watch the thousands steeled,  
Watching one, prone on's face  
Ready to set the place,  
While in the autumn sun  
The kicker nerves for's run.

There, in the goal, in line,  
The fifteen wait the sign . . .  
And see . . the ball goes down . . .  
A great gasp takes the town,  
Kicker and foemen rush.  
The ball goes up in a hush . .  
Up, in a quake of soul . .  
It hits the post, and . . Goal.

Or in the Spring, we go  
To Kew, as the bulbs blow  
To see what lovely thing  
Shall deck the Queen of Spring  
And what small flowers sweet  
Shall be about her feet

In that fair Dream of May  
His genius will portray.  
The great flowers and tiny  
The stalks erect or twiney  
The soft-leaved and the spiny.  
All are new facets bright  
Of everlasting light.  
So at the Zoo the strange  
Fish, birds and beasts who range,  
With swift fin, wing and paw,  
Are light prisoned in law,  
Each with a beauty dear,  
My lover shall make clear.  
What gay life looks at us  
From the convolvulus  
And what red force of Mars  
From the tiger's prison-bars.

But most we love returning  
To the small fire burning,  
Through the deserted town  
The lamp-light dwindled down,  
Through starlit street and square  
In the night's smokeless air,

Hardly a window glowing  
None, but the night-cat, going,  
(Save, afar-off, the feet  
Of pointsman on his beat)  
Each of us thinking Bed  
The eyelids touched with lead  
The intellect released  
By sleep, healer and priest,  
To Dream where splendours make  
Wonders for when we wake.

A mouse runs in the walls,  
A coal in the grate falls,  
Without, no noise of men  
One distant voice, Big Ben,  
Calling, then falling still,  
Quiet are want and will,  
Away, the self and greed  
Of every artist's need;  
All is resolved and laid  
New lavendered, remade,  
Sure to be brighter,  
When it is lighter.

When morning brings the day  
I am a draped clay  
To Mahlstick Tubes, R.A.  
Who makes me War or Peace  
In his mind's candle-grease.















